

**TESTIMONY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE
BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON INLAND
FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE
IN OPPOSITION TO L.D. 896**

AN ACT TO ALLOW FOX HUNTING AT NIGHT

PRESENTED BY: Representative WILLETTE of Mapleton

COSPONSORED By: Senator JACKSON of Aroostook
Senator SHERMAN of Aroostook.

DATE OF HEARING: April 2, 2013

Good afternoon Senator Dutremble, Representative Shaw and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am Jim Connolly, Wildlife Division Director at the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, speaking in opposition to **L.D. 896**.

L.D. 896 establishes a fox hunting season at night.

The department is opposed to this bill as presented. Red fox and gray fox are a valuable fur resource in the State of Maine. Foxes are not regarded as a nuisance animal and play an important ecological role preying on rodents across the state. In general the department supports the expansion of hunting opportunity within the state when wildlife populations are at sufficient levels to support it. Currently fox populations in Maine appear stable and capable of supporting the additional trapping pressure we expect as a result of the recent increases in fur prices. Our data would indicate the current trapping and hunting seasons in place are adequate to maintain a stable fox population in the state. This additional night hunting effort has the potential to shift this important fur resource away from trappers. In addition, the data derived from the tagging of furbearers when analyzed in conjunction with effort data from trappers allows us to monitor trends in the population. As proposed in this bill, that tagging information would not automatically be available from foxes that were taken by hunting at night, thus limiting information needed for the management of fox.

I would be glad to answer any questions at this time or during the work session.